TOMB OF DRACULA
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THE TOMB OF DRACULA™

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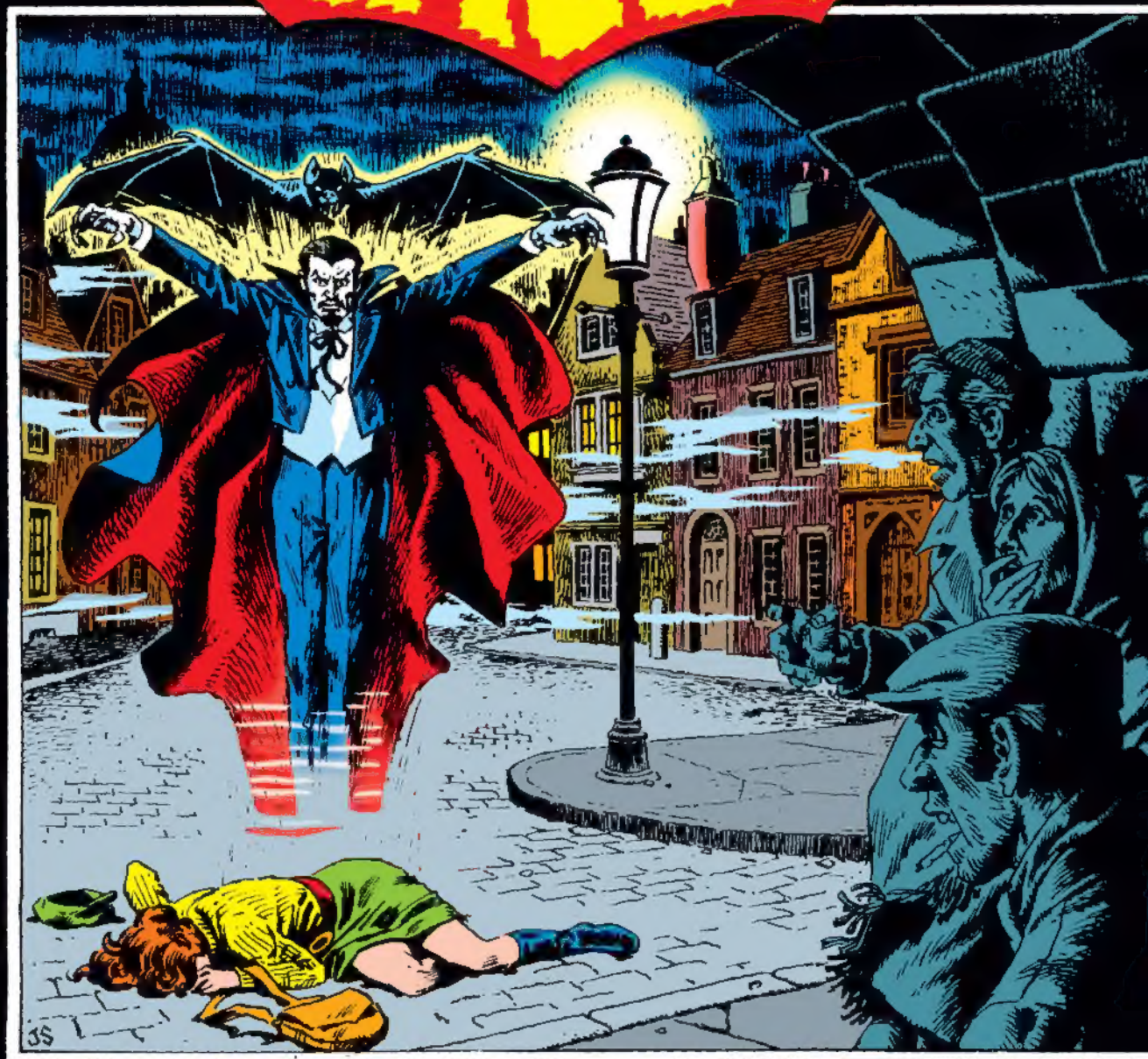

A SHRILL SCREAM SPLITS THE AIR IN LONDON AT MIDNIGHT...

Who Stole My Coffin?

TOMB OF DRACULA!™

THE FEAR WITHIN!
NIGHTMARE! SOLE DESCENDENT OF THE LEGENDARY COUNT, YOU'VE CROSSED AN OCEAN AND A CONTINENT TO FIND THIS HIDDEN LAND, FRANK DRAKE--AND HERE, IN THE RUINS OF THE THRICE-DAMNED CASTLE DRACULA, YOU SEEK THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION WHICH MOST PAINFULLY SEARS YOUR HEART--
WHERE IS HE?
HAS HE SUCCEEDED IN ESCAPING ME--OR DO I STILL HAVE A CHANCE TO GAIN MY REVENGE?
DO YOU KNOW, GORT--CAN YOU EVEN ANSWER?
OR MY NEWFOUND FRIEND, ARE YOU AS DUMB AS THOSE FEAR-SCATTERED BATS?
--BUT YOUR ONLY REPONSE IS THE SIGH OF THE COLD MOOR WIND--!
STAN LEE, EDITOR, PRESENTS: A GERRY CONWAY/GENE COLAN PRODUCTION! ASSISTED BY: VINCE COLLETTA, inker JON COSTA, letterer

BUT, IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER, DOES IT? I HIRED YOU FOR YOUR HANDS, NOT FOR YOUR MIND...
I'LL DO THE THINKING FOR BOTH OF US, MY FRIEND...
...FOR ME, IT COMES EASILY.
FOR, AFTER ALL... ALL I HAVE ARE MY MEMORIES.
AND THOSE MEMORIES BURN, STINGING YOUR EYES ALMOST AS MUCH AS THE HEAT FROM YOUR HAND-HELD LANTERN...
...A LANTERN WHOSE LIGHT BUT BARELY EXPOSES THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE THE VILLAGERS WROUGHT WHEN THEY PUT THE CASTLE TO FLAME...
BY ITS LIGHT, YOU DESCEND INTO THE CASTLE, DEEPER INTO THE CLAMMY DARKNESS WITH EACH FURTIVE STEP...
UNTIL FINALLY, YOU REACH A CRUMBLING PASSAGEWAY...
...AND THERE, YOU SEE WHAT YOU'VE COME SO FAR TO FIND...
GORT, THIS IS IT...
...THE TOMB OF DRACULA!
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THE DOOR IS PARTIALLY OPEN...
...WITH A SURGE OF SUDDEN EXCITEMENT, YOU THROW YOURSELF AGAINST IT...
...AND DISCOVER WITHIN...ONLY SILENCE...
HE'S BEEN HERE, GORT... WHO ELSE COULD HAVE LIT THOSE CANDLES?
AND UNLESS I'M GROSSLY MISTAKEN...
...THIS IS DRACULA'S HIDEOUS COFFIN!
YOUR MIND REELS BACK, BACK ALONG THE CORRIDORS OF REMEMBRANCE, BACK THROUGH THE TERRORS OF THE PAST FEW WEEKS...
YOU RECALL YOUR SUDDEN BANKRUPTCY...THE HELPLESS KNOWLEDGE OF SEEMING TOTAL DEFEAT...YOU REMEMBER A FRIEND NAMED CLIFTON, YOUR FIANCEE'S FORMER LOVER...
SO THE FAMILY NAME IS DRACULA, EH, FRANK?
A GOLD MINE...?
--AND YOU OWN THE OLD COUNT'S CASTLE? LISTEN, FRANK--YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A GOLD MINE!
YOU REMEMBER HOW JEANIE REFUSED TO STAY IN NEW YORK... HOW THE THREE OF YOU CAME HUNDREDS OF MILES THROUGH A BITTER STORM, UNTIL...
...THE CASTLE!
PACK YOUR SUITCASES, KID--I'LL EXPLAIN ON THE WAY!
AND MORE--YOU REMEMBER CLIFTON'S ABRUPT DISAPPEARANCE, AND MOMENTS LATER--THE COMING OF DRACULA!
DON'T YOU SEE, FRANK?
YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A READY-MADE TOURIST INDUSTRY!
FRANKIE--FRANKIE, WHAT IS IT?
MY GOD--THERE ARE VAMPIRES--AND LORD HELP US--
--ONE OF THEM'S ALIVE!
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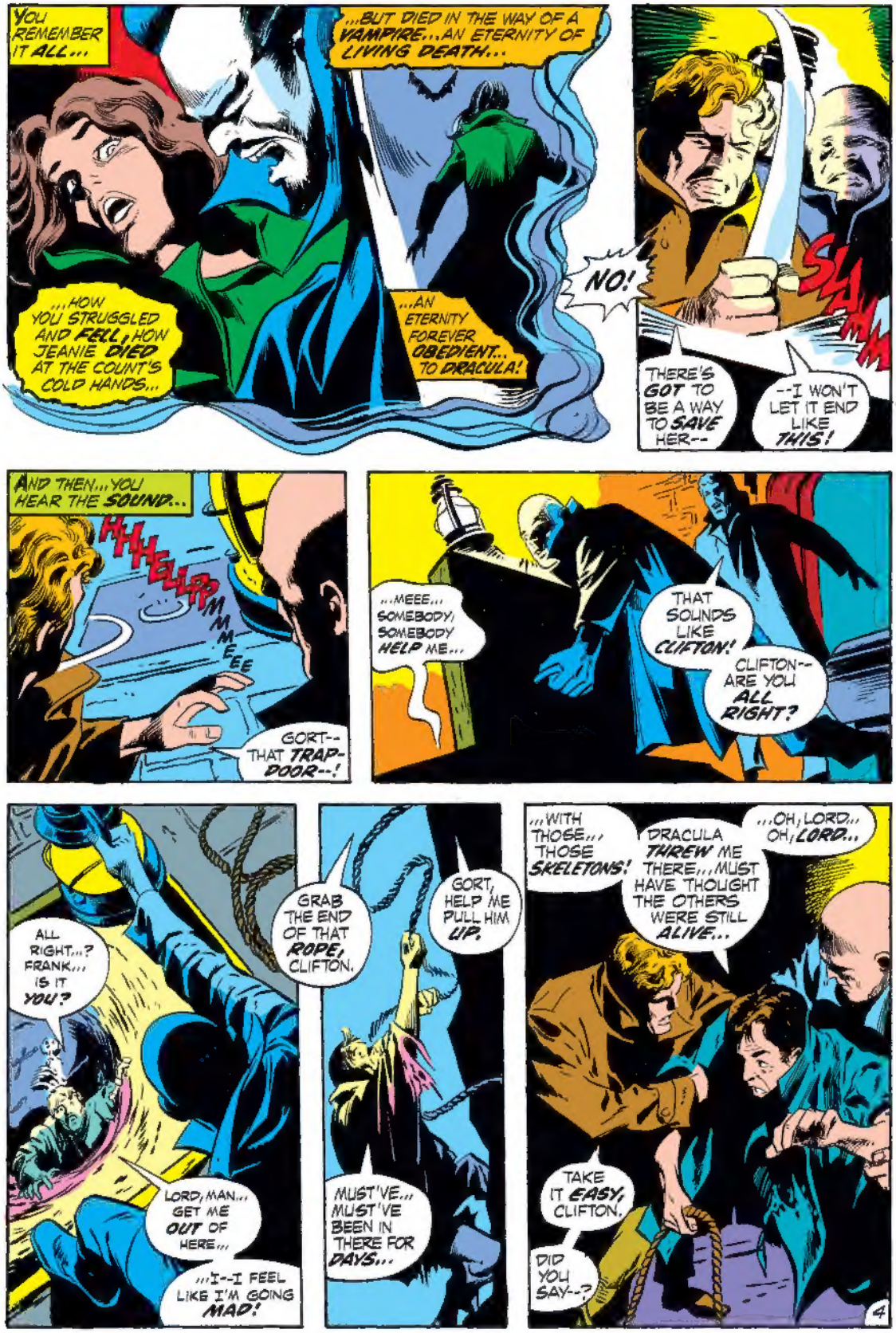
YOU REMEMBER IT ALL...
...BUT DIED IN THE WAY OF A VAMPIRE...AN ETERNITY OF LIVING DEATH...
...HOW YOU STRUGGLED AND FELL, HOW JEANIE DIED AT THE COUNT'S COLD HANDS...
...AN ETERNITY FOREVER OBEDIENT... TO DRACULA!
NO!
SLAMM
THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY TO SAVE HER--
--I WON'T LET IT END LIKE THIS!
AND THEN...YOU HEAR THE SOUND...
HHHELLPP MMEEE
GORT-- THAT TRAP-DOOR--!
...MEEE... SOMEBODY, SOMEBODY HELP ME...
THAT SOUNDS LIKE CLIFTON!
CLIFTON-- ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
ALL RIGHT...? FRANK... IS IT YOU?
LORD, MAN... GET ME OUT OF HERE...
...I--I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING MAD!
GRAB THE END OF THAT ROPE, CLIFTON.
GORT, HELP ME PULL HIM UP.
MUST'VE... MUST'VE BEEN IN THERE FOR DAYS...
...WITH THOSE... THOSE SKELETONS!
DRACULA THREW ME THERE... MUST HAVE THOUGHT THE OTHERS WERE STILL ALIVE...
...OH, LORD... OH, LORD...
TAKE IT EASY, CLIFTON.
DID YOU SAY--?
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YES, FRANK-- DRACULA! HE-- HE WAS AWAKE WHEN I GOT HERE...
...I TRIED TO STOP HIM... BUT HE CAME AT ME...
...NEARLY KILLED ME...
HE MUST HAVE KEPT THAT PIT FULL OF PEOPLE...
...PEOPLE TO USE... WHEN HE GREW... THIRSTY...!
BUT YOU'RE NOT LISTEN-ING!
WHAT--WHAT ARE YOU DOING--WITH HIS COFFIN?
CALM DOWN, CLIFTON!
HE'S NOT HERE NOW... AND AS FOR HIS CASKET...
...WE'RE STEALING IT.
AND WHAT OF THE NIGHT KINGDOM'S COUNT? SCANT YARDS AWAY, MIDST THE SWIRLING FOG AND MIST OF THE NEARBY LOWLAND...
...THE OPPRESSIVE SILENCE IS BROKEN BY THE PATTER OF RUNNING FEMALE FEET, THE HARSH RUSH OF BREATH, THE THRUST OF THE VILLAGE GIRL'S FRIGHTENED SCREAM--
...A SCREAM THAT IS BARELY BEGUN...
EEEEEE
EEEEE
...BEFORE IT IS BROKEN!
MEIN GOTT!
HERR DOKTOR-- WHAT IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN--?
A SCREAM, MY FRIEND...
I AM AFRAID... THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS ANEW.
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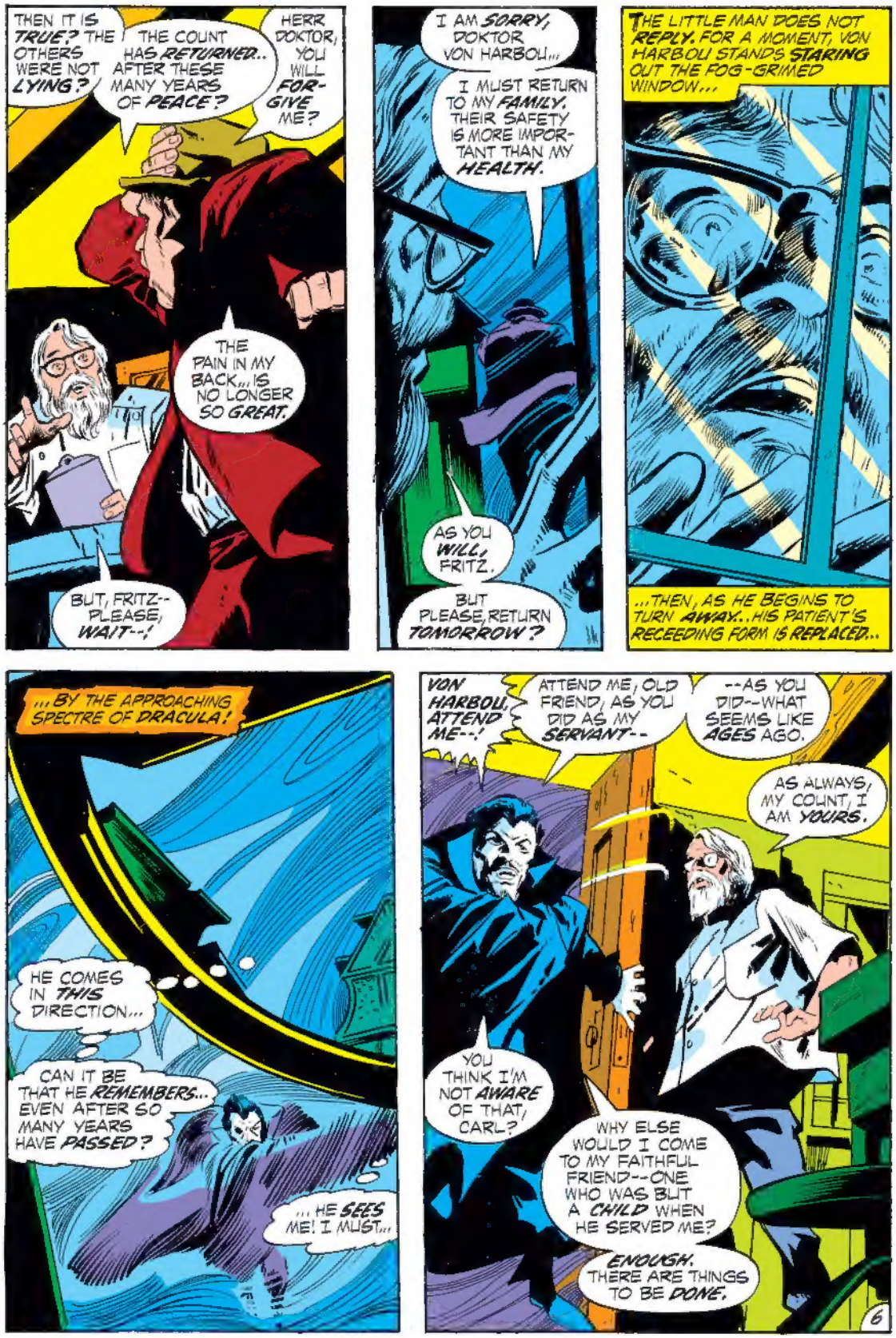
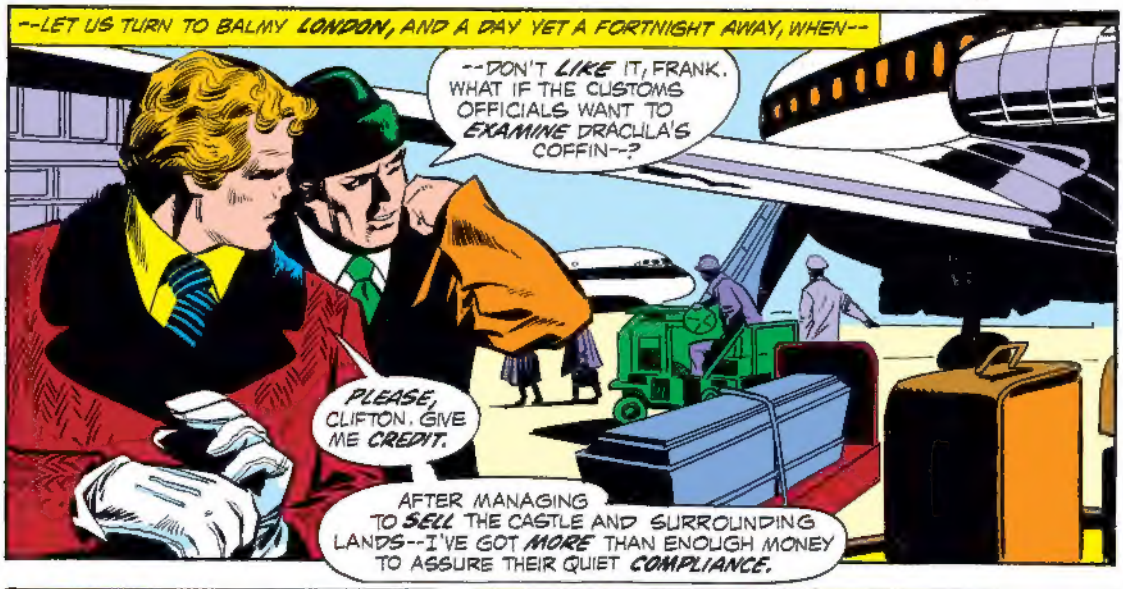

THEN IT IS TRUE? THE OTHERS WERE NOT LYING?
THE COUNT HAS RETURNED.. AFTER THESE MANY YEARS OF PEACE?
HERR DOKTOR, YOU WILL FORGIVE ME?
THE PAIN IN MY BACK... IS NO LONGER SO GREAT.
BUT, FRITZ-- PLEASE, WAIT--!
I AM SORRY, DOKTOR VON HARBOU...
I MUST RETURN TO MY FAMILY. THEIR SAFETY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN MY HEALTH.
AS YOU WILL, FRITZ.
BUT PLEASE, RETURN TOMORROW?
THE LITTLE MAN DOES NOT REPLY. FOR A MOMENT, VON HARBOU STANDS STARING OUT THE FOG-GRIMED WINDOW...
...THEN, AS HE BEGINS TO TURN AWAY.. HIS PATIENT'S RECEEDING FORM IS REPLACED...
...BY THE APPROACHING SPECTRE OF DRACULA!
HE COMES IN THIS DIRECTION...
CAN IT BE THAT HE REMEMBERS... EVEN AFTER SO MANY YEARS HAVE PASSED?
...HE SEES ME! I MUST...
VON HARBOU, ATTEND ME--!
ATTEND ME, OLD FRIEND, AS YOU DID AS MY SERVANT--
--AS YOU DID--WHAT SEEMS LIKE AGES AGO.
AS ALWAYS, MY COUNT, I AM YOURS.
YOU THINK I'M NOT AWARE OF THAT, CARL?
WHY ELSE WOULD I COME TO MY FAITHFUL FRIEND--ONE WHO WAS BUT A CHILD WHEN HE SERVED ME?
ENOUGH. THERE ARE THINGS TO BE DONE.

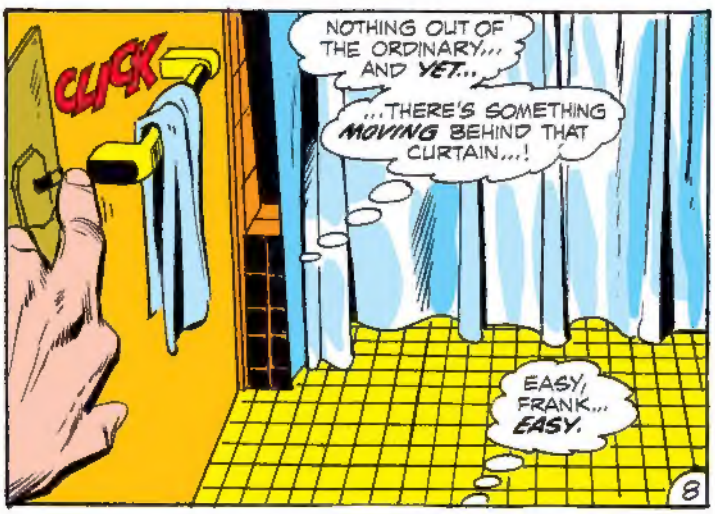
THE YEARS HAVE NOT BEEN KIND TO ME, OLD FRIEND.
THERE REMAINS AN UNEARTHLY PALLOR TO THE CAST OF MY SKIN--
--A PALENESS GAINED BY THOSE LONG YEARS SPENT INTERRED--
--AN AFFLICTION YOU MAY YET RELIEVE, DEAREST CARL--
--AND RELIEVE-- AT ONCE!
AND SOON, AFTER HOURS OF EXPERIMENTATION, AND FINALLY, OPERATION, THERE RINGS GRIM LAUGHTER IN VON HARBOU'S HUMBLE COTTAGE...
EXCELLENT, VON HARBOU...
...BUT FOR A FEW REMAINING DISABILITIES, I COULD PASS FOR ONE OF YOU WEAKLING MORTALS.
YOU ARE PLEASED, MY COUNT?
QUITE, CARL! YOU'VE DONE A FINE JOB...
CONSIDERING THE PROBLEMS YOU WERE UNABLE TO OVERCOME...
...SUCH AS THIS CURSED LACK OF REFLECTION.
THEN... YOU ARE DONE WITH ME, MY COUNT?
DONE? NOT JUST YET, I'M AFRAID...
THERE REMAINS THE MATTER OF RETRIBUTION...
RE-RETRIBUTION...? I...DO NOT UNDERSTAND...!
DON'T YOU, CARL?
DO YOU THINK I WOULD FORGET WHAT YOU DID THOSE MANY YEARS AGO?
YES, A BOY, VON HARBOU--
COUNT-- I WAS BUT A BOY--!
--THE VERY BOY WHO BETRAYED ME TO MY KILLERS!
YOU DESERVE A REWARD FOR YOUR ACTIONS THIS NIGHT, MY FRIEND--
--AND FOR YOUR DEEDS THAT EVE SO MANY NIGHTS AGO!
EEEEEEE
EVEN AS THE FEAR-CRAZED SCREAM FADES, AND THE STRUGGLING FORMS DROP TO THE SHADOWED COTTAGE FLOOR--
7

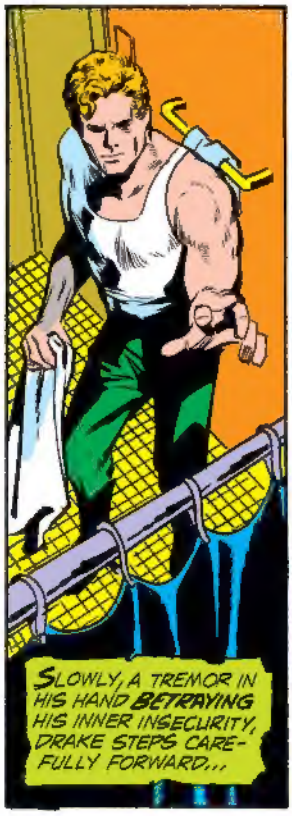

--LET US TURN TO BALMY LONDON, AND A DAY YET A FORTNIGHT AWAY, WHEN--
--DON'T LIKE IT, FRANK. WHAT IF THE CUSTOMS OFFICIALS WANT TO EXAMINE DRACULA'S COFFIN--?
PLEASE, CLIFTON. GIVE ME CREDIT.
AFTER MANAGING TO SELL THE CASTLE AND SURROUNDING LANDS--I'VE GOT MORE THAN ENOUGH MONEY TO ASSURE THEIR QUIET COMPLIANCE.

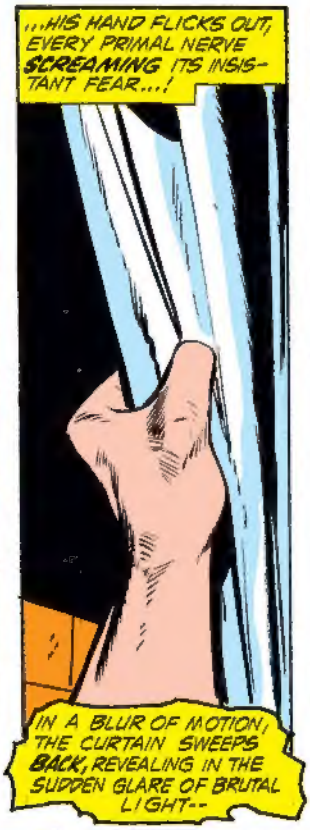
AND DRACULA, FRANK--?
WE'LL DEAL WITH THE COUNT SOON ENOUGH.
I'M SURE OF IT!

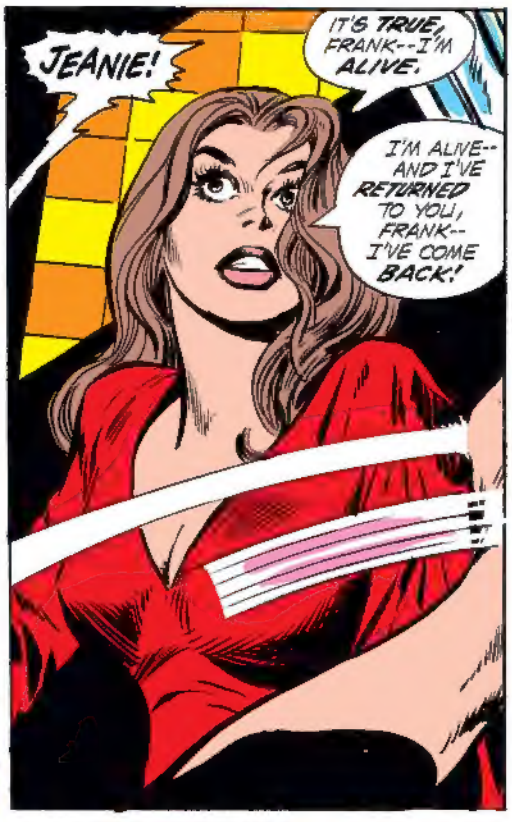
HOURS LATER, AS DRAKE PREPARES FOR AN EVENING'S REST IN THE COMPARATIVE CALM OF HIS HOTEL SUITE...
KLINK
...A SUDDEN SOUND DISTURBS THE BREWING SILENCE...

ODD... CLIFTON'S NOT DUE BACK FOR AN HOUR YET...
...IF IT IS CLIFTON...

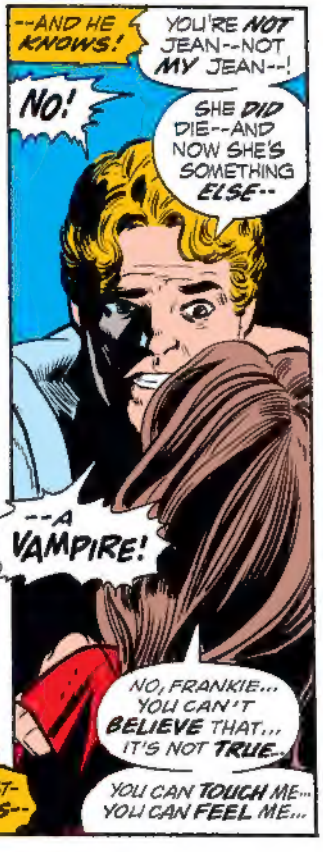

CLICK
NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY... AND YET...
...THERE'S SOMETHING MOVING BEHIND THAT CURTAIN...!
EASY, FRANK... EASY.

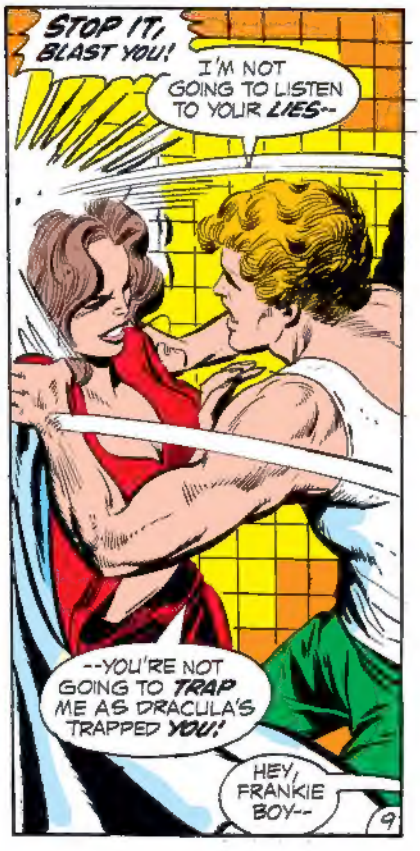

SLOWLY, A TREMOR IN HIS HAND BETRAYING HIS INNER INSECURITY, DRAKE STEPS CAREFULLY FORWARD...

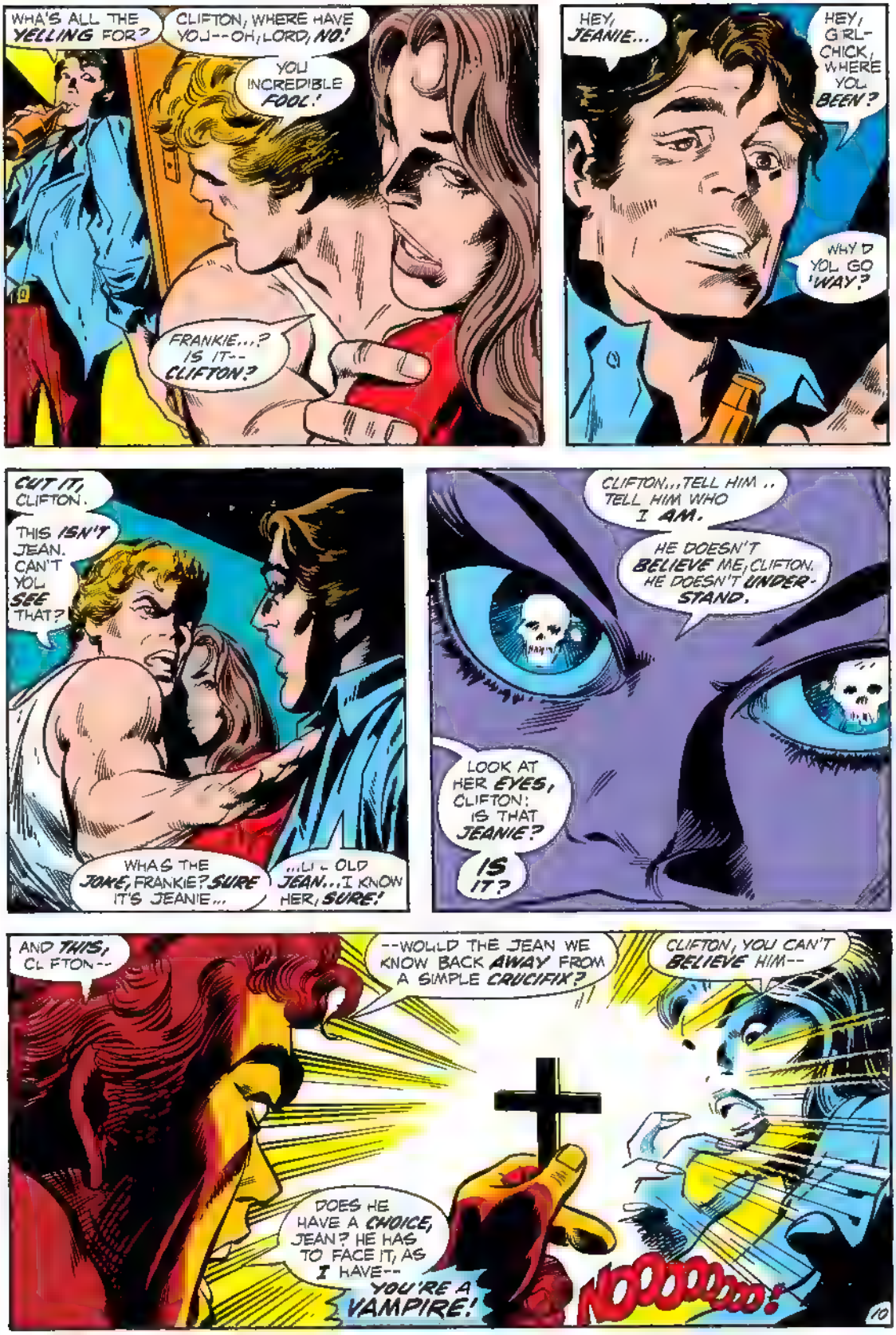

...HIS HAND FLICKS OUT, EVERY PRIMAL NERVE SCREAMING ITS INSISTANT FEAR...!
IN A BLUR OF MOTION, THE CURTAIN SWEEPS BACK, REVEALING IN THE SUDDEN GLARE OF BRUTAL LIGHT--

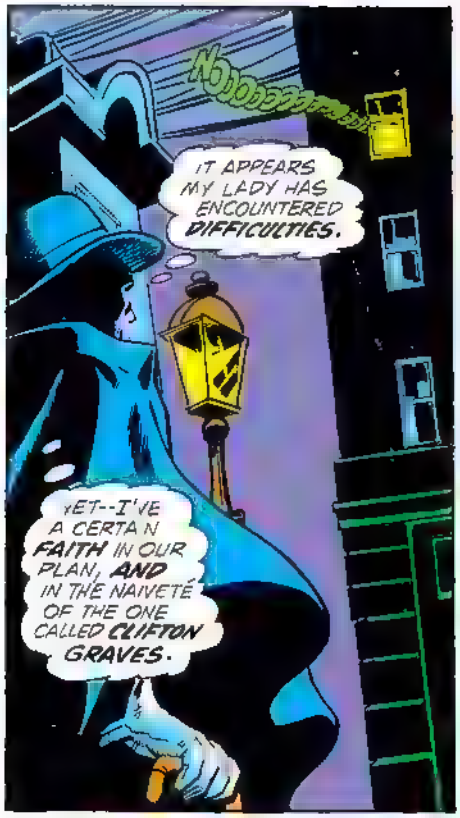

JEANIE!
IT'S TRUE, FRANK--I'M ALIVE.
I'M ALIVE--AND I'VE RETURNED TO YOU, FRANK--I'VE COME BACK!

WITHOUT THINKING, HE PULLS HER TO HIM, FEELING HER HANDS TOUCH HIS SHOULDER--
--FEELING THE ICY BURNING OF HER GRASP--AND IN THAT FIRST, ALMOST-FATAL MOMENT, HE REMEMBERS--

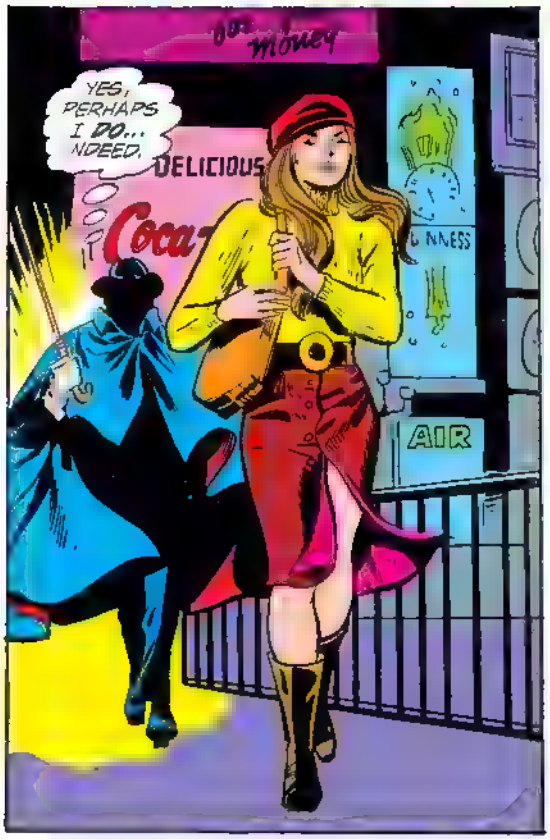

--AND HE KNOWS!
YOU'RE NOT JEAN--NOT MY JEAN--!
NO!
SHE DID DIE--AND NOW SHE'S SOMETHING ELSE--
--A VAMPIRE!
NO, FRANKIE... YOU CAN'T BELIEVE THAT... IT'S NOT TRUE...
YOU CAN TOUCH ME... YOU CAN FEEL ME...

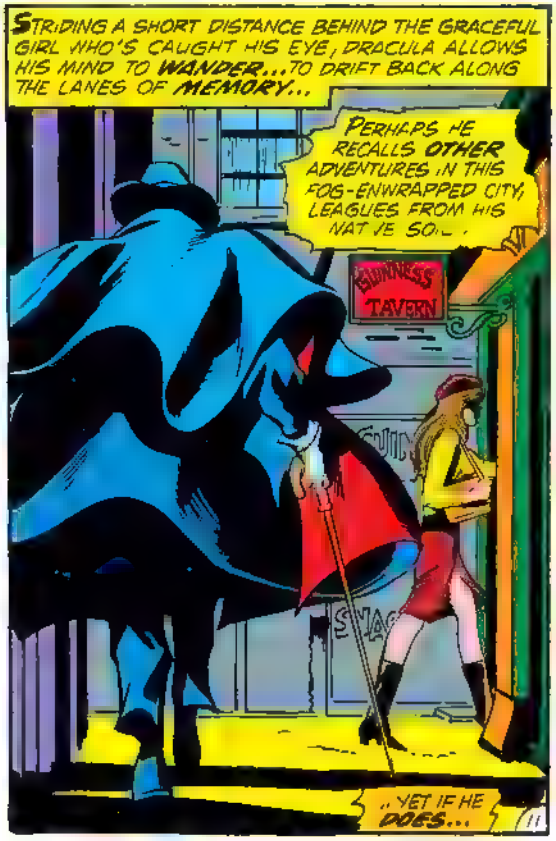

STOP IT, BLAST YOU!
I'M NOT GOING TO LISTEN TO YOUR LIES--
--YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TRAP ME AS DRACULA'S TRAPPED YOU!
HEY, FRANKIE BOY--

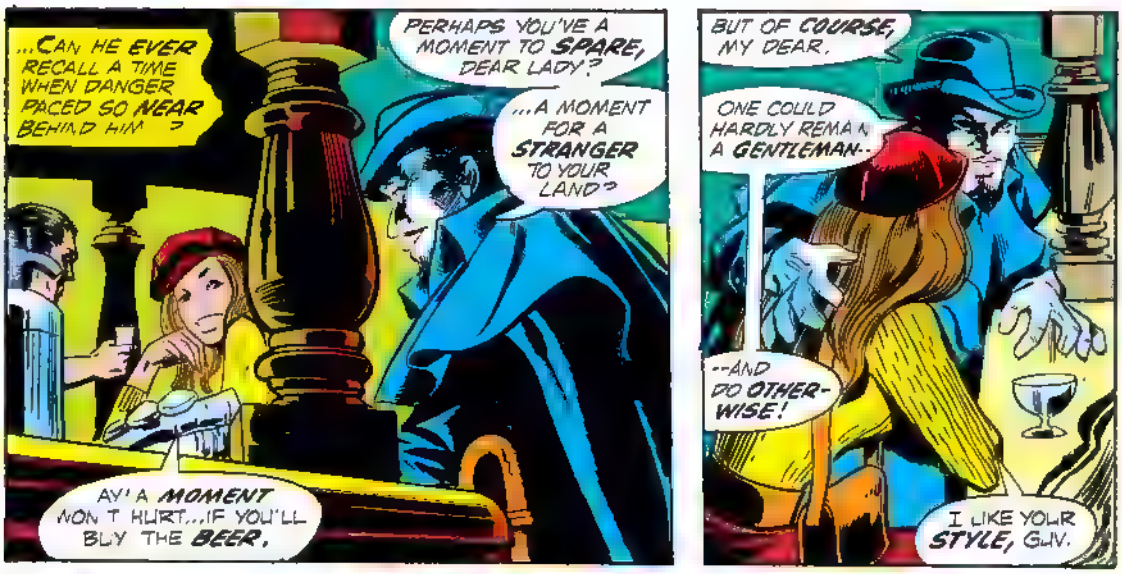

WHA'S ALL THE YELLING FOR?
CLIFTON, WHERE HAVE YOU--OH, LORD, NO!
YOU INCREDIBLE FOOL!
FRANKIE...? IS IT-- CLIFTON?
HEY, JEANIE...
HEY, GIRL-CHICK, WHERE YOU BEEN?
WHY D YOU GO 'WAY?
CUT IT, CLIFTON.
THIS ISN'T JEAN. CAN'T YOU SEE THAT?
WHA'S THE JOKE, FRANKIE? SURE IT'S JEANIE...
...LI - OLD JEAN... I KNOW HER, SURE!
CLIFTON... TELL HIM .. TELL HIM WHO I AM.
HE DOESN'T BELIEVE ME, CLIFTON. HE DOESN'T UNDER-STAND.
LOOK AT HER EYES, CLIFTON: IS THAT JEANIE?
IS IT?
AND THIS, CLIFTON--
--WOULD THE JEAN WE KNOW BACK AWAY FROM A SIMPLE CRUCIFIX?
CLIFTON, YOU CAN'T BELIEVE HIM--
DOES HE HAVE A CHOICE, JEAN? HE HAS TO FACE IT, AS I HAVE--
YOU'RE A VAMPIRE!
NOOOOOOO!
10


IT APPEARS MY LADY HAS ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTIES.
YET--I'VE A CERTAIN FAITH IN OUR PLAN, AND IN THE NAIVETÉ OF THE ONE CALLED CLIFTON GRAVES.

YES, ALL SHALL GO WELL, THIS EVENING
BUT NOW, I'VE NEED TO REPLENISH MY ENERGIES... AND PERHAPS I SEE THE MEANS TO THAT MOST DESIRABLE END..!


YES, PERHAPS I DO... INDEED.
DELICIOUS
AIR

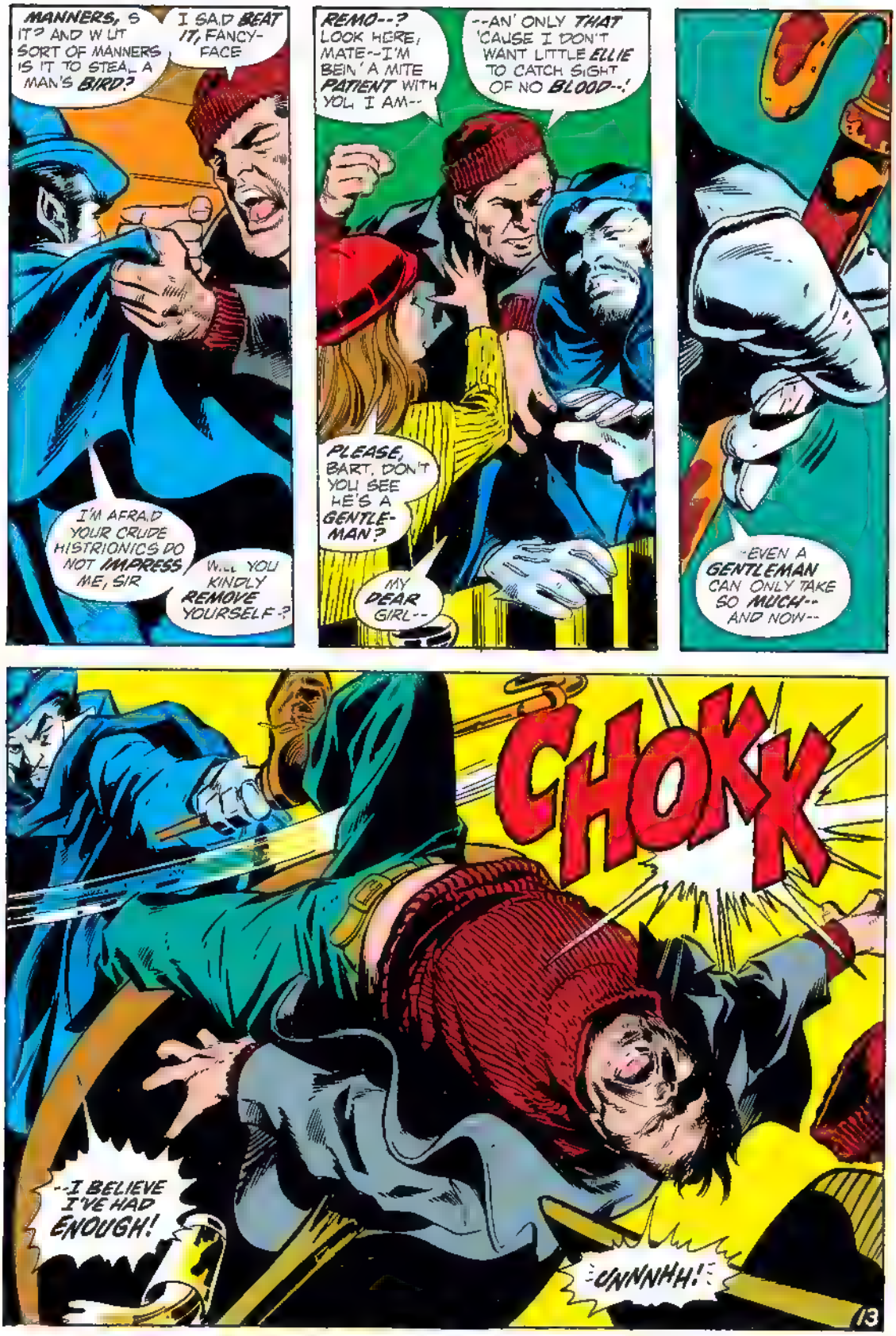

STRIDING A SHORT DISTANCE BEHIND THE GRACEFUL GIRL WHO'S CAUGHT HIS EYE, DRACULA ALLOWS HIS MIND TO WANDER...TO DRIFT BACK ALONG THE LANES OF MEMORY...
PERHAPS HE RECALLS OTHER ADVENTURES IN THIS FOG-ENWRAPPED CITY, LEAGUES FROM HIS NATIVE SOIL.
GUINNESS TAVERN
..YET IF HE DOES...


...CAN HE EVER RECALL A TIME WHEN DANGER PACED SO NEAR BEHIND HIM ?
PERHAPS YOU'VE A MOMENT TO SPARE, DEAR LADY?
...A MOMENT FOR A STRANGER TO YOUR LAND?
AY! A MOMENT WON'T HURT...IF YOU'LL BUY THE BEER.
BUT OF COURSE, MY DEAR.
ONE COULD HARDLY REMAIN A GENTLEMAN--
--AND DO OTHERWISE!
I LIKE YOUR STYLE, GUV.

THERE AREN'T MANY BLOKES WHO'D PAY A LADY'S TAB THESE DAYS.
YOU HAVE A NAME, GUV?
YES...YOU MAY CALL ME...DRAKE.
STRANGE... THIS GIRL REMINDS ME OF ANOTHER OF HER KIND...
...A COMMON BARMAID IN MY NATIVE VILLAGE. MOST STRANGE...TO REMEMBER ONE LIKE HER.*
*SEEN IN OUR FIRST ISSUE.--S.

BUT BEFORE THE COUNT'S MUSING THOUGHTS CAN GO FURTHER--
--TO EXAMINE, MAYHAP, THE NATURE OF HIS NEW EMOTION--

EY, MATE--WHAT'S THE IDEA OF SITTIN' WITH ME GIRL?
BEAT IT 'AFORE I GIVE YOR ARM A LITTLE TWIST, EY?
I BEG YOUR PARDON--?
OH, BART--WHERE'S YOUR BLINKIN' MANNERS?


MANNERS, S IT? AND W UT SORT OF MANNERS IS IT TO STEAL A MAN'S BIRD?
I SAID BEAT IT, FANCY-FACE
I'M AFRAID YOUR CRUDE HISTRIONICS DO NOT IMPRESS ME, SIR
WILL YOU KINDLY REMOVE YOURSELF?
REMO--? LOOK HERE, MATE--I'M BEIN' A MITE PATIENT WITH YOU, I AM--
--AN' ONLY THAT 'CAUSE I DON'T WANT LITTLE ELLIE TO CATCH SIGHT OF NO BLOOD--!
PLEASE, BART, DON'T YOU SEE HE'S A GENTLE-MAN?
MY DEAR GIRL--
-EVEN A GENTLEMAN CAN ONLY TAKE SO MUCH-- AND NOW--
CHOKK
--I BELIEVE I'VE HAD ENOUGH!
-UNNNHH!-

YOU-- JUST HIT HIM! BART-- HE'S FOUGHT PROFES-SIONALS--
--AN' YOU--YOU JUST HIT HIM!
QUITE!
NOW, IF YOU'VE NO OBJECTIONS...?
..THERE'S SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU
BEHIND THEM, THE WHISPERS BEGIN ..AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE, AS THEY ALWAYS WILL...
SOON, IN A DIM-LIT SIDESTREET A FEW BLOCKS FROM THE NOW-SOMBER TAVERN...
EEEEEEEEEEE
THE SOUNDS OF A SCUFFLE ARE SHATTERED BY A SCREAM...
...A SCREAM WHICH FADES...
...AND FINALLY DIES.
THE COUNT PAUSES OVER HIS PREY, HIS EARS DETECTING THE PAD OF RUNNING FEET...
...BUT BY THE TIME THE MEN FROM THE TAVERN ARRIVE... IT IS ALREADY FAR TOO LATE...!
GOR! IT'S THE FANCY-DRESSED ONE WIT' ELLIE.. OH LORD--
--OH GOOD LORD!
HE'S--HE'S CHANGING-- BECOMIN' SOME SORT OF BAT--
-BART...LOOKIT ELLIE-- LOOKIT POOR ELLIE!
AND AS THE MEN RUSH FORWARD..
14

..THE TRANSFORMED COUNT DRACULA DRIFTS LAZILY UPWARD THROUGH THE MOIST LONDON SKY, TOWARD A CERTAIN DARK HOTEL...
...AND A RENTED SUITE DIRECTLY ABOVE FRANK DRAKE'S!
MY DEAR COUSIN MUST TAKE ME FOR A FOOL--
STEALING MY SACRED COFFIN WAS INDEED AN INCONVENIENCE TO ME--BUT HARDLY FATAL.
FOR IT'S NOT THE WOOD WHICH MATTERS--
--BUT THE TRANSYLVANIAN EARTH WHICH FILLS MY MORNING SEPUL-CHRE--!
AND YET, THE COFFIN WILL BE MINE--
"--BECAUSE MINE IS THE PLAN WHICH CANNOT FAIL!"
"EVEN NOW, THE GIRL-WITCH CALLED JEAN MUST BE GAINING SUBTLE CONTROL OVER THE ALL-TOO-MORTAL CLIFTON GRAVES--"
"--AND WHEN SHE SUCCEEDS--"
"--THE GAME IS MINE!"
BUT, CLIFTON-- ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?
FRANK'S INSANE... THE STRAIN OF WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME...
.. IT'S DONE SOMETHING TO HIS MIND.
I'M STILL THE SAME INSIDE, CLIFTON... NO MATTER WHAT I AM...
...AND I REALIZE NOW... THAT IT'S YOU I'VE LOVED.. ALL ALONG!
ME? YOU MEAN THAT?
15

...OF COURSE.
THE MIRROR... SHE HAS NO REFLECTION.
WHAT FRANK SAID IS TRUE... SHE'S A VAMPIRE... AND IT'S MY FAULT BECAUSE I WAS THE ONE WHO RELEASED COUNT DRACULA.
...YET... YET, WHAT DOES THAT MATTER?
SHE SAYS SHE LOVES ME ..HAS ALWAYS LOVED ME...
...AND THAT'S ALL I EVER WANTED... ISN'T IT?
...ISN'T IT?
AND SOON...
HERE'S THAT COFFEE YOU WANTED, FRANK.
'FRAID IT'S NOT VERY GOOD...
JUST SO LONG AS IT KEEPS ME AWAKE!
AFTER ALL, IT WOULDN'T DO TO BE SLEEPING IF OUR DEAR FRIEND THE COUNT... SHOULD...
...CLIFTON, YOU'RE RIGHT... IT'S NOT.. VERY GOOD...
...WAIT... EVERYTHING'S SPINNING... COFFEE.
...DRUGGED.
EXCELLENT, JEAN...YOU HANDLED CLIFTON GRAVES SUPERBLY.
EVERYTHING'LL BE OKAY NOW, JEANIE... YOU'LL SEE...
HE'S UNDER COMPLETE HYPNOSIS...AND ISN'T EVEN AWARE HE'S BEING CONTROLLED!
...ALL... OKAY...!
16

LAUGHTER ECHOES IN THE CONFINES OF THE SUITE, GRIM AND HOLLOW... THE ECHO OF UNLIVING THINGS, THE ETERNAL MOCKERY OF ALL THAT IS REAL...
YET, AS THE TRIUMPHANT TRIO ENTER THE NEXT ROOM, IN SEARCH OF THE COUNT'S PURLOINED CASKET...
ALL IS NOT QUITE WHAT SEEMS IN THE DARKNESS BEHIND THEM...
FOR, BRIEF MOMENTS LATER, THE SOUND OF AN OPENING DOOR DISRUPTS ALL REVEL...
JEANIE...
COME JUST THE SMALLEST BIT CLOSER, MY DARLING... LET ME...KISS YOU...
DEAR CLIFTON, DEAR, DEAR FOOL...
NO!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT SORT OF A SPELL YOU'VE GOT HIM UNDER--
--BUT MAYBE SOMETHING LIKE THIS CAN MAKE THAT POOR IDIOT SEE REASON--!
REASON? M'LOVE, REASON HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT...
KILL HIM, CLIFTON!
KILL HIM!
IT'S NO GOOD-- THE CROSS DOESN'T AFFECT CLIFTON, AND IT'S TOO FAR AWAY FROM DRACULA OR JEAN! ONLY ONE WAY TO HANDLE THIS--
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I'M SORRY, CLIFTON--
BUT AS THE SAYING GOES--
--YOU'LL THANK ME FOR THIS!
I'VE COME TOO FAR THESE PAST FEW WEEKS TO LET YOU--
OR A CUP OF DRUGGED COFFEE--
COME BETWEEN ME AND MY GOAL--!
AND IF I MAY PRESUME AS MUCH, FRANK DRAKE--
--I ASSUME THAT GOAL--
IS ME!
WITH A SPEED UNCANNY, A SPEED INHUMAN, THE DARK-HAIRED COUNT THROWS HIMSELF FORWARD, HIS FANGS BARED--
--HIS EYES WILD--
--HIS ENTIRE FORM WRACKED WITH MADNESS!
WE COULD HAVE BEEN ALLIES, YOU AND I--YOU, DESCENDANT OF MY BLOOD--PERHAPS ACCURSED AS I AM--
--YET INSTEAD OF AIDING ME--OF BREAKING THE AGE-OLD LONELINESS--
--YOU BETRAYED ME--AND ATTACKED--AND ATTACKED!
I DID WHAT I HAD TO DO--
--I CAN'T LET THIS NIGHTMARE GO ON! I CAN'T!
YET THE WORDS COME TOO SLOWLY--AND TOO LATE! THEIR TWISTING FORMS CRASH BACKWARD, TOWARD THEIR FATE--THEIR DESTINY!

YET, EVEN AS THE SOUNDS OF THEIR STRUGGLE GROW MORE FRANTIC, DRAKE'S BREATH MORE RASPING WITH EACH NEW BLOW--
--SHORT FEET AWAY, TO THE WOMAN CALLED JEAN, 'TIS AS THOUGH IT ALL HAPPENS IN ANOTHER WORLD--
--FOR, OBLIVIOUS TO THE EVENTS AROUND HER, SHE BEGINS TO BEND FOWARD--
--HER EYES--HER ENTIRE FORM--AWARE OF ONE THING ALONE--THE BURNING NEED TO FEED!
NOW THEY ARE SILENT--EVERY FIBRE OF THEIR RESPECTIVE BEINGS ALIVE WITH THE FEVER OF BATTLE--
LIKE DREAM-SHAPES, THEIR SHADOWS DANCE 'GAINST TABLE AND WALL, MOVING WITH A SEEMING ARCANE LIFE--
--MOVING EVER CLOSER TO DEATH!
WITH A CRY OF TRIUMPHANT RAGE, ONE FIGURE LIFTS THE OTHER--EVERY MUSCLE KNOTTING IN THIS INSTANT OF APPARENT VICTORY--
--WITHIN THE CRY, THERE SNARLS A MUTTERING VOICE--BUT THE WORDS ARE LOST TO THAT MOST BESTIAL INFLECTION--
--AND ONLY THE ACTION REMAINS!
KRASH

BUT BE STILL, MY LOVE...
SOON, WE'LL BE FOREVER JOINED... IN THAT LIFE APART FROM LIFE...
...THE ETERNITY OF LIVING DEATH!
FRANK... OH, LORD... FRANK...!
SHAKING OFF THE FOG OF MOMENTARY UN-CONSCIOUSNESS, DRAKE GROPES FOR A WEAPON-- ANY WEAPON--
--AND FATE BRINGS TO HIS HAND THAT WEAPON HE MOST DESPER-ATELY NEEDS--
--AND GIVES HIM THE STRENGTH-- THE VERY WILL--TO USE IT!
TIME SEEMS TO HALT. FOR ONE SCARLET MOMENT, HER EYES WIDEN IN FRIGHTENED SHOCK-- HER LIPS OPEN TO EMIT A WAILING SCREAM--
AIEEEEEEEEEEEE
--AND IN THAT MOMENT, DRAKE REALIZES WHAT HE'S DONE-- AND KNOWS, THAT FOR HIM-- THAT MOMENT WILL LAST--FOREVER!

AND BEFORE A GRIM REPRISAL CAN BE MADE, FATE TAKES ANOTHER HAND...
DAWN! I DARE STAY NO LONGER--!
KNOW THIS, FRANK DRAKE-- YOU'VE WON BUT A BATTLE--
IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE GAME IS MINE--
--AS IT ALWAYS HAS BEEN--WILL ALWAYS BE--
--MINE-- FOREVER MINE!
HE TURNS AND DIVES, HIS FORM TRANS-FORMED AGAINST THE SOFT BEGINNING GLIMMERS OF GOLDEN SUNRISE--
--AND AS HE SWOOPS AWAY, PERHAPS HE HEARS THE MOAN BEHIND HIM--
--A MOAN--OF RE-TURNED AWARENESS!
FRANK...? I'M DYING, FRANK...
THE SUN-LIGHT...!
JEANIE!
HEAVEN, WHAT HAVE I DONE?
DON'T, FRANK... PLEASE DON'T...
...IT'S BETTER THIS WAY... I DON'T HURT ANYMORE... I DON'T HRRRRRRR.
DRAKE SINKS TO HIS KNEES, ONLY VAGUELY CONSCIOUS OF CLIFTON'S BROKEN SOBS... THE SOBS OF SHATTERED SANITY...
HIS EYES BURN... AND IN HIS SOUL, HE UNDERSTANDS THE FULL MEANING OF FUTILITY...
...HE REALIZES, ONLY NOW... THAT INTENTIONS TAKE A MAN JUST SO FAR...
...AND THAT THERE LIES THE MEANING OF REVENGE...IN THE SORROW AND AGONY... OF GRIM FRUSTRATION!
NOW, MORNING! AND FOR A TIME, AT LEAST, THE END.
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